

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

**Commencement Address at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis,
Maryland**

May 25, 2018

The President. Thank you. Thank you. Hello, midshipmen. Hello. [*Laughter*] Great going. And let me say that to the entire brigade: Please, be at ease, enjoy yourselves. Because we are all here to celebrate the amazing class of 2018. Amazing job. Thank you. Really something.

Admiral Carter, thank you for that wonderful introduction and for your leadership and the incredible job you've done at this storied academy. And thank you, Captain Chadwick, for your dedication and service. Thank you to Under Secretary Modly, Admiral Richardson, General Walters for joining us today. Thanks, also, to Senator Wicker, Congressman Wittman, and Congressman Valadao.

I want to recognize the entire brigade for a tremendous year. This has been a spectacular year for you. I've heard all about your achievements. [*Laughter*] And a very special recognition for the midshipmen fourth class, you are plebes no more. [*Applause*]

To all of the distinguished faculty and staff; to the local sponsor families; and most importantly, to the parents and grandparents and family members who have helped our graduates reach this joyous hour: Today is your incredible achievement also. They would have never made it without you. You know that.

So I want to thank our midshipmen. I want to thank your families. And thank you. America thanks you more than anybody. You have done a spectacular job. Thank you very much.

Finally, to the men and women about to be commissioned as ensigns in the Navy and second lieutenants in the Marine Corps, let me say on behalf of the entire Nation: We could not be more proud of the United States Naval Academy Class of 2018. Thank you. Great job. Congratulations to you all.

Four years ago, each of you made the most important decision of your lives. You chose the path of hard work, sweat, and sacrifice. You chose the life of honor, courage, and commitment. You chose to serve the Nation and defend our great American flag. You chose the Navy Blue and Gold. From the first moments of Induction Day through a grueling 6 weeks of Plebe Summer, you endured, and you persevered. And then, the rest of the brigade returned, and the real test began.

You developed morally, mentally, and physically. You poured yourselves into military tactics, seamanship, navigation, ethics, and engineering. And when hard work wasn't enough, like generations before you, you gathered your pennies and sought favor from the all-powerful Tecumseh. [*Laughter*] All-powerful. A little bit different. [*Laughter*]

Others worked hard for their demerits at McGarvey's and the Fleet Reserve Club. And so today, in keeping with tradition, I declare that all midshipmen on restriction for minor offenses—[*laughter*—you are hereby absolved. [*Laughter*] That sounds like a lot of people. [*Laughter*] The Admiral will define exactly what that means. [*Laughter*] So, Admiral, please go easy. Please. Okay? Please go easy. That's a great group of people here, Admiral. [*Laughter*]

I'm told that this class led Navy athletics to the highest win percentage in your 172-year history. Think of that. That includes taking the Army-Navy Star Series for the fourth-straight year, a remarkable achievement in sport and athletics. Remarkable.

And because you care about every contest against Army, for the record: This year, Navy beat Army 19 times. And I will not mention, I promised, who won the football game. I will not mention. *[Laughter]* I won't mention it, Admiral. Refuse to say it. *[Laughter]*

But that is a great achievement. And let me take a guess: You're still not tired of winning. Winning is such a great feeling. Isn't it a great feeling. Winning. It's a great feeling. Nothing like winning. You've got to win.

In every endeavor, the class of 2018 has shown its mettle, and it's proved its might. You have earned your place in that ancient league of sailors and shipmates, captains and commanders, warriors and mariners—and marines. You crave adventure—hello, folks back there—*[laughter]*—you chase discovery, and you never flinch in the eye of a raging storm. America is in your heart. The ocean is in your soul. The saltwater runs through your veins.

You live your life according to the final law of the Navy: The word "impossible" does not exist because Navy never quits. You don't give up. You don't give in. You don't back down. And you never surrender. Wherever you go, wherever you serve, wherever your mission takes you, you only have one word in mind, and that's "victory." It's why you're here. Victory. Very important word.

You are now leaders in the most powerful and righteous force on the face of the planet: the United States military. And we are respected again, I can tell you that. We are respected again. A lot of things have happened. We're respected again.

For the last 4 years, you have walked the same paths as Navy's greatest legends: the giants of Midway and Coral Sea and Manila Bay. Here in Annapolis, the glorious past is all around you, and so are the stories of your great heroes. One such hero who appears in the pages of your old yearbooks is Bruce Voorhis. You know Bruce Van Voorhis—well known all over.

Bruce hailed from Nevada and was a member of the Naval Academy Class of 1929. Beneath his picture in the 1929 Lucky Bag, Bruce's classmates wrote that "he spent most of his time teaching the city slickers from the East the correct pronunciation of Nevada." *[Laughter]* And I had to learn that, too, to win the State. *[Laughter]* Great place.

He saw studying as "an unnecessary evil." And they remembered, "In three cruises, and 4 years in blue serge, brass buttons, he left a trail of broken hearts extended the full length of both coasts and radiating for miles around Crabtown." In other words, he was just like you in many ways. *[Laughter]* Just like you. Not a lot of difference.

Just over a decade after his graduation, Lieutenant Commander Van Voorhis found himself at war. Seventy-five years ago this summer, he was in the South Pacific, commanding Bomber Squadron 102 during the Battle of the Solomon Islands. That was a rough battle. His only brother had been killed in the Bataan Death March.

On July 6, Bruce volunteered for a mission to destroy a crucial enemy base. It was a rough time. It was a rough, tough situation. He knew full well that he would likely never return. He knew he was going to die. But he also knew his daring action could prevent a surprise attack on large-scale American forces.

So his plane took off alone on a 700-mile flight. Bruce flew through the darkness to his target, a tiny speck on the vast open sea. He braved unrelenting antiaircraft fire like nobody had ever seen at that time and a trail of enemy planes to single-handedly destroy this large enemy base, including multiple fortifications and a critical communications link. And in this final act of valor, Bruce was caught in the blast of one of his own bombs and perished in a remote lagoon very far from here. His life was lost, but his legacy will live forever.

Many of you have seen the star marking Bruce's old room in Bancroft Hall commemorating his congressional Medal of Honor, our highest honor. Some here today will trace his path to Pensacola to earn your wings. You may even make it all the way out to the legendary combat training school, known as Top Gun, in Bruce's beloved hometown in Fallon, Nevada. There, you will have the honor to take flight from Van Voorhis Field and remember a hero who fought for his country and died for his homeland and saved so many lives with his bravery.

Each of you inherits the legacy of the heroes who came before you. It's a living history passed down from officer to officer and generation to generation. Each of you will make your own mark on the Navy, the Marine Corps, the military, and the history of our great Nation. Seize today, and you will shape tomorrow.

In a few moments, you will be commissioned into the mightiest fighting forces of the air, the land, and the sea. Together, you will blast off carriers, of which we're just now finishing the largest aircraft carrier in the world; launch off submarines, of which we have many under construction; and ward off evil. You will bring comfort to our friends, and you will strike fear into the hearts of our enemies.

Among our graduates today will be 283 naval aviators, 134 submariners, 256 surface warfare officers, 70 restricted line officers, and 15 explosive ordnance disposal officers; 236 United States marines; and 35 very tough, very well-conditioned Navy SEALs. Together, you are the tip of the spear, the edge of the blade, and the front of the shield defending and protecting our great country.

You know, there is no mission our pilots can't handle. There is no hill our marines can't take. And there is no stronghold the SEALs can't breach. There is no sea the Navy can't brave. And there is no storm the American sailor can't conquer. Because you know that together, there is nothing Americans can't do. Absolutely nothing.

In recent years and even decades, too many people have forgotten that truth. They've forgotten that our ancestors trounced an empire, tamed a continent, and triumphed over the worst evils in history. In every generation, there have been cynics and critics who try to tear down America. It's not working too well lately. *[Laughter]* But in recent years, the problem grew worse. A growing number used their platforms to denigrate America's incredible heritage, challenge America's sovereignty, and weaken America's pride.

But we know the truth, we will speak the truth, and we will defend that truth. America is the greatest fighting force for peace, justice, and freedom in the history of the world. And in case you haven't noticed, we have become a lot stronger lately. A lot.

We are not going to apologize for America; we are going to stand up for America. No more apologies. We are going to stand up for our citizens. We are going to stand up for our values. And we are going to stand up for our men and women in uniform. *[Applause]* Right? Because we know that a nation must have pride in its history to have confidence in its future.

We are the nation that built the highways; the railroads; the Empire State Building, in one year; the Golden Gate Bridge; and we are the nation that built the Panama Canal. We trekked the mountains, explored the oceans, and settled the vast frontier. We won two World Wars, defeated communism and fascism, and put a man on the face of the Moon. We cured disease, pioneered science, and produced timeless works of art that inspire the human soul.

And on distant islands, far-away battlefields, above the skies and beneath the sea, the entire world has borne witness to the unstoppable strength, skill, and courage of the United States Navy and the American Marines. Each of you enters service at a truly exciting time for our country. For we are witnessing the great reawakening of the American spirit and of American might. We have rediscovered our identity, regained our stride, and we're proud again. Prosperity is booming at home, our economy is the strongest it's ever been, and our country has regained the respect that we used to have long ago abroad. Yes, they're respecting us again. Yes, America is back.

We have begun the great rebuilding of the United States military. We have ended the disastrous defense sequester. No money for the military—those days are over. And we've just secured—you've read all about it—a \$700 billion dollar—largest ever—amount of money to support our great warfighters.

And I might add that, next year, the \$700 billion—not million—they're liking the sound of "million," but billion is better. *[Laughter]* The \$700 billion goes to \$716 billion, and we are going to be stronger than ever before. We will have the strongest military that we've ever had, and it won't even be close. And when did we need it more than now?

That means new ships. *[Applause]* You like that. *[Laughter]* We have, now, the lowest number of ships that we've have since World War I. And very soon, you're going to be up to 355 beautiful ships. Three hundred and fifty-five. That's almost a couple of hundred more ships. So you're going to be around for a long time. *[Laughter]* We're not running out of equipment. We're not running out of ships. And that's been approved. And we are honored by it.

You're going to have new equipment and well-deserved pay raises. We just got you a big pay raise. First time in 10 years. We got you a big pay increase. First time in over 10 years. I fought for you. That was the hardest one to get, but you never had a chance of losing. *[Laughter]* I represented you well. I represented you well.

And this week, we passed a new landmark legislation to give more choice and better care to our great veterans. We're going to take care of our veterans. We're doing a great job with it. We are taking care—finally, after decades, we're taking care of our veterans.

We passed VA accountability. Everybody said it couldn't be done. That's if you don't do a good job, you couldn't get fired. Now, you don't do a good job, you don't take care of our vets, they look at you right in the eye, and they say: "Jim, you're fired. Out. Out. You're fired." *[Laughter]* Get him out of there. They all said you couldn't get that. They tried to get it for 35 years. We just say: "Get him out of here. He doesn't take care of our vets."

Next year, we're committing even more to our defenses, and we're committing even more to our veterans. Because we know that the best way to prevent war is to be fully prepared for war and, hopefully, we never have to use all of this beautiful, new, powerful equipment. But you know, you're less likely to have to use it if you have it and if you know how to work it. And there's nobody knows how to work it like you. And if a fight must come, there is no other alternative—victory, winning—beautiful words. But that's what it's all about.

We are reestablishing the Second Fleet in the Atlantic. Bigger, better, stronger than it's ever been before. We are rebuilding our defense industrial base to forge American iron, aluminum, and steel, which, by the way, we just put tariffs on when it comes in from other countries. Okay? We're taking in a lot of money now—our country. They pay that big, beautiful tariff. It goes right into rebuilding new ships. *[Laughter]* We've been taken advantage of by the world. That's not going to be happening anymore. You see what's going on. So we're building that modern fleet manned by the greatest sailors anywhere in the world.

We're sharpening the fighting edge of everything from Marine infantry squads to combat ships to deliver maximum lethal force. The enemy has to know we have that.

And we are recommitting to this fundamental truth: We are a maritime nation. True. And being a maritime nation—we're surrounded by sea—we must always dominate that sea. We will always dominate the oceans.

We are showing what we can achieve when natural American confidence is backed by unrivaled American power and unquestioned American resolve. Also, there's another word that's never used, and I'll use it today: It's called "talent." We have talent. And a lot of other people don't, and a lot of other countries don't. We have great talent, and I've seen it. In other words, we are showing what is possible when America starts acting like its sailors and its marines.

Our Nation cannot be strong without the heroes whose hearts stir the words "Don't give up the ship." Very famous phrase. We even use it in business. Things are going bad, you say: "Don't give up the ship. Keep fighting. Don't give up the ship." But it's really—you guys started it. *[Laughter]*

Our country cannot prevail without those who rally to Admiral Farragut's famous cry—you know it well—"Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead." Boom. *[Laughter]* "Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead."

You hail from every background, and you come from every walk of life. But each of you is formed by the same defining choice to answer the call. You all share the same heart, the same blood, and swear by the same motto: "Not for self, but country." It's a great motto.

With us today are living symbols of that long and unbroken chain of American patriots, members of the Naval Academy Class of 1968. That's great. Stand up, please. Please. *[Applause]* Exactly 50 years ago, they were in your shoes. They embarked into service, and they made America very proud. To everyone in the class of '68, we thank you, and we salute you.

Like those who came before them, today's graduates will serve America through times of triumph and some hours of peril. There will be hours of peril. You will face new challenges, even challenges that you can't envision. But you'll find new solutions that nobody can even imagine.

Among your ranks is the next Chester Nimitz, the next Grace Hopper, the next John Lejeune. Future generations will talk about you. They will tell your stories, speak of your courage. And someone, many years from now, will be standing right here in my position paying tribute to your great service. It will happen.

Because you already know the keys to success. You know that as long as we are proud of who we are and what we are fighting for, we will not fail. We cannot fail. We will always succeed. Always. As long as we are united with the same mission, the same purpose, the same

patriotic heart, we will win. Because we are one people, one family, and one glorious Nation under God.

Together we struggle, together we strive, together we pray, and together we triumph as citizens, as patriots, as Americans. We stand on the shoulders of heroes who gave their sweat, their blood, their tears, and their very lives for this great country of ours. This is our heritage. This is our home. And this is our pledge: We are all-in for America like never before. We are all-in for our great country.

So to the Naval Academy of the Class of 2018, I say a number of things. Number one, I say that I was given an option. I could make this commencement address, which is a great honor for me, and immediately leave and wave goodbye. Or I could stay and shake hands with just the top 100. Or I could stay for hours and shake hands with one-thousand-one-hundred-and-something. What should I do? What should I do?

Audience members. Stay! Stay! Stay!

The President. Stay! I'll stay. I'll stay. [Applause] I'll stay.

But to the class of 2018, I do say, strive for excellence, live for adventure, think big, dream bigger, push further, sail faster, fly higher, and never, ever stop reaching for greatness. Never stop reaching for the stars.

You know you're up to the task. You're among the finest people anywhere in the world—the smartest, the strongest. You know you will make us proud. We know that glory will be yours because you are winners, you are warriors, you are fighters, you are champions, and you will lead us only to victory.

Good luck. May God be with you. God bless America. And anchors aweigh. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Vice Admiral Walter E. "Ted" Carter, Jr., Superintendent, and Capt. Robert B. Chadwick II, Commandant of Midshipmen, U.S. Naval Academy; Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson, USN; and Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Glenn M. Walters, USMC.

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